

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY SOFIA PRIORITY
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SUBJECT: MAY 8 ROUNDUP: PRESS ITEMS OF ARMS CONTROL
INTEREST

LONDON FOR AMB/EX, SOFIA FOR AMBASSADOR

1. GEORGE WILSON OF WASHINGTON POST REPORTED SUNDAY THAT
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SOVIET UNION "HAS WITHDRAWN ITS 'CATEGORICAL' OBJECTION" TO
U.S. USING COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT LIKE 747 AS CRUISE MISSILE
CARRIER. WILSON SAID SOVIETS DURING RECENT SALT NEGOTIA-
TIONS IN GENEVA "BACKED OFF THEIR FLAT-OUT OPPOSITION TO
WIDE-BODIED JETS PERFORMING AS CRUISE MISSILE CARRIERS BUT
PRESSED FOR SEVERAL LIMITING CONDITIONS." HE SAID ONE
CONDITION SOUGHT BY SOVIETS BUT STILL AT ISSUE IS BUILDING

WIDE-BODIED JET FROM GROUND UP AS MISSILE CARRIER RATHER THAN CONVERTING EXISTING PASSENGER PLANES TO THAT ROLE. "SOVIET NEGOTIATORS, SOURCES SAID, CONTEND THEY MUST BE ABLE TO TELL MISSILE CARRIER FROM PASSENGER PLANE AT GLANCE--PRESUMABLY BY SPY SATELLITES," WILSON ADDED. HE SAID 747, DC-10, OR OTHER PASSENGER JET SELECTED FOR CRUISE MISSILE ROLE WOULD HAVE TO HAVE CLEARLY DISTINGUISHABLE DOORS AND OTHER CHARACTERISTICS IDENTIFYING ITS MISSION TO SATISFY SOVIETS. POST CORRESPONDENT SAID U.S. NEGOTIATORS AT SALT NEGOTIATIONS IN GENEVA ARE ARGUING THAT WIDE-BODIED JET FULL OF CRUISE MISSILES SHOULD COUNT AS ONE VEHICLE UNDER AGREED-UPON LIMIT OF 1,320 MISSILES AND BOMBERS CARRYING MORE THAN ONE NUCLEAR WARHEAD. UNDER THAT RATIONALE, U.S. COULD DEPLOY 1,200 MULTIPLE-WARHEAD LAND AND SUBMARINE MISSILES PLUS 120 CRUISE MISSILE CARRIERS. "IF ALL 120 CARRIERS EVENTUALLY BECAME WIDE-BODIED TRANSPORTS CARRYING 70 CRUISE MISSILES EACH, SOVIET DEFENDERS WOULD HAVE TO CONTEND WITH 8,400 WARHEADS--AN UNENVIABLE TASK....RATHER THAN GO ALONG WITH U.S. BY COUNTING WIDE-BODIED MISSILE CARRIER AS ONE BOMBER WITHIN 1,320 LIMIT, SOVIET NEGOTIATORS HAVE SAID EACH JUMBO JET SHOULD COUNT AS THREE BOMBERS BECAUSE IT COULD CARRY THREE TIMES AS MANY MISSILES AS B-52. U.S. IS REJECTING THIS ARGUMENT."

2. IN FOLLOW-UP STORY MONDAY IN NEW YORK TIMES, RICHARD BURT SAID CARTER ADMINISTRATION "IN AN EFFORT TO REACH UNCLASSIFIED

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NEW ACCORD TO LIMIT STRATEGIC ARMS, HAS OFFERED TO MODIFY AIRCRAFT ARMED WITH CRUISE MISSILES SO THAT MOSCOW CAN DISTINGUISH THEM FROM CIVILIAN TRANSPORTS." HE QUOTED OFFICIALS AS SAYING MOSCOW HAD NOT YET REACTED TO U.S. PROPOSAL AND TWO SIDES WERE STILL SEEKING FORMAL AGREEMENT ON FORMULA FOR INCLUDING WIDE-BODIED JETS EQUIPPED WITH CRUISE MISSILES IN NEW ARMS AGREEMENT. HE SAID THESE OFFICIALS INDICATED THAT THIS ISSUE WAS UNLIKELY TO BE SIGNIFICANT OBSTACLE IN FUTURE TALKS. BURT SAID WHILE SOVIET NEGOTIATORS HAVE AGREED THAT EXISTING AMERICAN BOMBERS COULD BE EQUIPPED WITH CRUISE MISSILES, MOSCOW HAS CONTINUED TO INSIST THAT USE OF NEW AIRCRAFT IN THIS ROLE BE SUBJECT TO SOVIET APPROVAL. "AMERICAN NEGOTIATORS HAVE REJECTED SOVIET POSITION, ARGUING THAT EACH SIDE SHOULD HAVE RIGHT TO DECIDE WHICH AIRCRAFT WOULD BE EQUIPPED WITH CRUISE MISSILES AND THUS INCLUDED UNDER 1,320 CEILING. BUT IN AN EFFORT TO ALLAY SOVIET CONCERN OVER FINDING AND COUNTING WIDE-BODIED CRUISE MISSILE CARRIERS, OFFICIALS SAID ADMINISTRATION WAS PREPARED TO ALTER ANY AIRCRAFT USED FOR THIS ROLE SO THAT IT COULD BE DISTINGUISHED FROM CIVILIAN AIRLINERS. THESE PROPOSED ALTERATIONS, WHICH OFFICIALS TERM 'FUNCTIONALLY RELATED,

OBSERVABLE DIFFERENCES,' WOULD CONSIST OF CHANGES TO EXISTING WIDE-BODIED JETS THAT WOULD ENABLE MOSCOW TO RECOGNIZE THEM AS MISSILE CARRIERS BY MEANS OF SPY SATELLITES. OFFICIALS SAID THAT DESIGNING NEW HATCHES FOR EXISTING JETS WOULD PROBABLY BE SUFFICIENT FOR THIS PURPOSE, BUT NEGOTIATORS HAVE ALSO SUGGESTED TO MOSCOW THAT OBSERVERS COULD BE INVITED TO U.S. TO INSPECT NEW AIRCRAFT IN ORDER TO EASE TASK OF VERIFYING AN ACCORD LIMITING CRUISE MISSILE CARRIERS. WHILE MOSCOW IS NOT YET SAID TO HAVE ACCEPTED THIS APPROACH, OFFICIALS EXPRESSED VIEW THAT MATTER WOULD BE CLEARED UP IN COMING WEEKS." BURT SAID OFFICIALS "ALSO QUESTIONED RECENT REPORT THAT SOVIET NEGOTIATORS WERE INSISTING THAT ANY NEW CRUISE MISSILE CARRIER BE SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED AND BUILT FOR PURPOSE.

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IN ADDITION, THEY DENIED THAT MOSCOW WAS ASKING THAT EACH WIDE-BODIED JET USED TO DELIVER CRUISE MISSILES BE COUNTED AS THREE BOMBERS UNDER PROPOSED 1,320 CEILING." BURT SAID OFFICIALS DISCLOSED THAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE RECENTLY ON SENSITIVE QUESTION OF SETTING LIMIT ON RANGE OF AIRLAUNCHED CRUISE MISSILES. TWO SIDES AGREED LAST YEAR TO LIMIT OF 2,500 KILOMETERS BUT U.S. NEGOTIATORS HAVE SINCE HELD OUT FOR EXTRA RANGE BECAUSE CRUISE MISSILES FOLLOW ZIGZAG COURSE TO THEIR TARGETS. IN RECENT TALKS, OFFICIALS SAID, MOSCOW AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO THIS, BUT NO FIRM FIGURE HAS BEEN REACHED BECAUSE ADMINISTRATION HAS NOT YET DETERMINED HOW MUCH EXTRA RANGE SHOULD BE PROVIDED. BURT SAID PENTAGON FAVORS 50 PERCENT INCREASE OVER 2,500 KILOMETER RANGE, BUT ACDA APPARENTLY IS ARGUING THAT 30 PERCENT WOULD BE SUFFICIENT.

3. HENRY TREWHITT OF BALTIMORE SUN REPORTED THAT ACDA COUNSELOR ADAM YARMOLINSKY SUGGESTED LAST WEEK THAT U.S. AND SOVIET UNION MIGHT SETTLE NEW SALT TREATY BY "AUTUMNAL EQUINOX"--SEPTEMBER 23. BUT YARMOLINSKY ADDED THAT ADMINISTRATION WOULD NOT EXPECT EARLY CONSIDERATION BY SENATE. "DELAY WOULD LEAVE NEW SALT TREATY SUBJECT TO CONSIDERATION BY CONGRESS THAT MIGHT DIFFER SUBSTANTIALLY FROM CURRENT ONE," TREWHITT POINTED OUT. MANY OFFICIALS BELIEVE CURRENT SENATE WOULD REJECT SALT TREATY NOW TAKING FORM, HE SAID.

4. WILLIAM BEECHER OF BOSTON GLOBE SAID CARTER ADMINISTRATION PLANNERS SAY THEY ARE WORRIED THAT UNLESS SALT TWO TREATY SPECIFICALLY FORBIDS SOVIETS FROM STUFFING MORE WARHEADS INTO THEIR BIG MISSILES, STRATEGIC BALANCE COULD BE UPSET OVER NEXT SEVERAL YEARS. HE SAID ONE ADMINISTRATION STUDY CONCLUDES THAT SOVIET SS-18 MISSILE, WHICH

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NOW CARRIES EIGHT WARHEADS, COULD BE CRAMMED WITH AS MANY AS 45 SMALLER ONES, EACH WITH ABOUT FIVE TIMES PUNCH OF WEAPON THAT LEVELED HIROSHIMA. SOURCES, BEECHER ADDED, SAID THIS PREVIOUSLY UNREPORTED ISSUE WAS ONE OF TOUGH ONES THAT REMAINED UNRESOLVED AFTER VANCE MET IN MOSCOW LAST MONTH WITH TOP SOVIET OFFICIALS.

5. BERNARD WEINRAUB OF NEW YORK TIMES OBSERVED THAT ANY U.S.-SOVIET COMPROMISE OVER FULL DEPLOYMENT OF BACKFIRE BOMBER IS BOUND TO SPARK INTENSE DEBATE ON CAPITOL HILL. WEINRAUB SAID AS POTENTIAL FINAL ISSUE IN CURRENT SALT NEGOTIATIONS, BACKFIRE IS "MOST VEXING, MOST DELICATE AND PERHAPS MOST POLITICALLY COMPLICATED ISSUE AND ONE THAT MAY MAKE OR BREAK SALT TALKS." VANCE

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